

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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SUBJECT: BUNDESWEHR RESTRUCTURING PROPOSAL UNDER FIRE

1. AN ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN THE FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG ON OCTOBER 9 INDICATES THE DEFENSE MINISTRY'S PROPOSAL FOR RESTRUCTURING THE BUNDESWEHR WILL MEET THE DETERMINED OPPOSITION OF THE CDU/CSU. DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER'S RESTRUCTURING PLAN CALLS FOR REDUCING THE ACTIVE DUTY FORCE LEVEL BY 30,000 MEN. THESE MEN, RECENTLY RELEASED FROM ACTIVE DUTY, WOULD BE PLACED IN

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A "STAND-BY READINESS" CATEGORY SUBJECT TO IMMEDIATE

RECALL BY THE DEFENSE MINISTER HIMSELF WITH NO NEED TO SECURE PRIOR BUNDESTAG APPROVAL. THE PROFESSED PURPOSE OF THE REFORM IS TO SAVE MONEY TO ENABLE THE FRG TO USE THE FUNDS FREED TO PURCHASE MODERN ARMS AND EQUIPMENT FOR THE BUNDESWEHR.

2. WHEN THE CONCEPT WAS ORIGINALLY CONCEIVED, THE DEFENSE MINISTRY THOUGHT THAT MORE THAN DM 500 MILLION (\$200 MILLION) COULD BE SAVED YEARLY. HOWEVER, IN ITS FORMAL BUDGET PRESENTATION, THE SAVINGS FIGURE HAS DIMINISHED TO DM 370 MILLION (\$148 MILLION). THE OPPOSITION POINTS OUT THE GOVERNMENT PLANS TO SPEND MORE THAN DM 11 BILLION (\$4.4 BILLION) FOR ARMS, EQUIPMENT AND SIMILAR CAPITAL INVESTMENTS. THE CDU/CSU BASES ITS OPPOSITION TO THE PROPOSAL ON THESE FIGURES, POINTING OUT THAT THE SAVINGS OF DM 370 MILLION IS TOO SMALL TO JUSTIFY THE PROPOSED RESTRUCTURING.

3. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE STAND-BY READINESS PROPOSAL MAKES A CHANGE IN THE REGULATIONS OF THE MILITARY SERVICE LAW NECESSARY. THE CDU/CSU INTENDS TO OPPOSE THE AMENDMENT WHICH THE GOVERNMENT WILL OFFER. BESIDES QUESTIONING THE MONETARY ADVANTAGES OF THE PLAN, THE OPPOSITION ASSERTS THAT THE "STAND-BY READINESS" CONCEPT WOULD HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE PERMANENT COMBAT READINESS OF THE BUNDESWEHR. THE CDU/CSU ALSO BELIEVES THAT THE RESTRUCTURING PLAN COULD PROVIDE A DECISIVE SIGNAL TO THE SOVIETS IN THE MBFR NEGOTIATIONS WHICH COULD LEAD TO SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT ALTHOUGH THE OPPOSITION CANNOT BLOCK THE AMENDMENT IN THE BUNDESTAG, ITS MAJORITY IN THE BUNDESRAT GIVES IT CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE ON THE EVENTUAL REALIZATION OF THE RESTRUCTURING PROPOSAL.

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